

CHANGING SUBSTANCE AND NATURE OF INITIAL PERIOD OF WAR

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[Article by Lt Gen A.I. Yevseyev, Candidate of Military Sciences, Docent:
"On Certain Trends in the Changing Substance and Nature of the Initial Period of a War (Based on the Experience of World Wars I and II)"; passages enclosed in slantlines printed in boldface]

[Text] In the last two wars, the entry of the opposing sides into the war and the conduct of military operations at the beginning of the war comprised a specific period, which differed significantly in substance from subsequent periods and had a number of unique features. The beginning of the war marked a transition from peaceful, political forms of struggle to the use of force. After that only the forms and methods of warfare changed. Along with the beginning of military operations during that period, an entire system of political, ideological, economic and actual military measures were carried out, there was a readjustment in the perception of the people, and all forces were mobilized for combatting the enemy. The warring parties attempted to implement plans devised in peacetime and to employ means of warfare unknown to the enemy and new methods of conducting combat operations. And experience showed that the interweaving of numerous political, economic, military and other factors made that period extremely complex. It was particularly complex in World War II, which involved many dozens of nations on various continents and affected the vital interests of almost all of the world's peoples.

Questions pertaining to the initial period of the war were discussed in a number of works and articles by Soviet and foreign authors. (Footnote 1) (Ye.A. Shilovskiy, "The Initial Period of the War" in VOYNA I REVOLUTSIYA, October 1933; "Nachalnyy period voyny" [The Initial Period of the War], under the general editorship of S.P. Iyanov, Moscow, Vojenizdat, 1974; VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 10, 1959; Nos 8, 9, 1960. Problems pertaining to the initial period have also been discussed in the works of V.A. Melikov, A.M. Zayonchikovskiy and R.P. Eydeman, in the Works of Foch Kuhlman, Ludendorff and a number of other military theoreticians.) The experience acquired in this area is also highly important today for the continuing study of a large group of problems.

The initial period of a war, which came into being with the appearance of large-scale armies requiring mobilization, assembling and deployment, subsequently continued to change. The changes in its substance and its nature were influenced by many factors. In our opinion, the employment of new types of weapons and combat equipment by the warring parties and changing methods of unleashing wars should be considered to be the main ones. Specific, fairly stable trends took shape in the process of change.

The /trend of change in the substance of the initial period/ was manifested most vividly in the past two world wars. This is graphically depicted in Table 1.

The table shows that the initial period of World War I mainly involved mobilization, assembly and deployment of forces, and conversion of the economy from peacetime to wartime footing. Until these measures were completed, combat operations were conducted by relatively small groupings and with the limited objectives of covering the strategic deployment of the armed forces for conducting military operations in accordance with plans for the first operations, and frustrating planned implementation of mobilization and deployment of forces by the opposing side.

In order to forestall the enemy in preparing for active combat operations, however, in World War I, even before it was declared, the parties secretly placed part of their armed forces onto wartime status, made preparations for general mobilization and deployed forces in regions adjacent to borders.

The combat characteristics of the weapons and military equipment were greatly enhanced during the period between the wars, and the improved economic capabilities of the developed nations created the situation for maintaining air forces and formations of tank, motorized and other branches of troops in a state of mobilizational readiness in peacetime, which could be used for a surprise attack and the conduct of active combat operations from the beginning of a war. It was primarily the military-political leadership of fascist Germany which took advantage of this. When it prepared for its predacious wars, it planned and implemented most of the preparatory steps pertaining to the conversion of the national economy onto a war footing and the concentration and deployment of its armed forces prior to the war. This was done in order to simultaneously commit to battle the main forces of its army and to conduct extensive offensive operations from the very beginning in the interest of achieving important strategic results. "An operation will only make sense," Hitler maintained, "if we totally defeat a state with a single thrust." (Footnote 1) ("Sovershenno sekretno! Tolko dlya komandovaniy !": Dokumenty i materialy" ["Top Secret! Only For Command!": Documents and Materials], Moscow, Nauka, 1967, p 143)

Soviet military thought during that period, although proceeding from the assumption that war between such states as Germany and the USSR would begin without advanced declaration with operations by large groupings of troops, accepted the possibility that the initial period would develop in approximately the same manner as in World War I. It was assumed that the main forces would go into action after border engagements and after the strategic deployment of the armed forces of the parties had been completed. It was

Table 1. Changes in the Substance of the Initial Period Based on the Experience of World Wars I and II*

War	Nations Taking Part in War	Substance	Duration	Results of Combat Operations by the Parties	
				1	2
World War I, 1914-1918	Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Russia	Mobilization, assembly and deployment of forces by parties; conduct of combat operations with limited forces for covering strategic deployment of armed forces in theatre of military operations and for detecting mobilization and deployment of enemy troops	15-16 days in West, 18-21 days in East	In West European theatre of military operations; occupation of Luxembourg and capture of Liege by German forces; capture of Muhlhausen by French forces, front of offensive around 120 km; depth of advance 35-40 km--	In West European theatre of military operations; combat operations by small cavalry groups for reconnaissance purposes
German-Polish War of 1939	Germany	Surprise attack on Polish territory by Wehrmacht; concentric strikes from Silesia and East Prussia with mission of routing main forces of Polish Army located west of Vistula and Narew rivers	1 Sep- 2 Oct 1939	Routing of Polish Army, defeat of bourgeois-ladowner Poland and occupation of its territory by German fascist forces; front of offensive 700 km; depth of advance 350-400 km; duration 17 days; average rate of advance 20-24 km per day	Advance by German fascist forces on main strategic axes temporarily halted by mid-July; main forces of Soviet Army suffered extensive losses but preserved fighting efficiency and stabilized defensive front
Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945	Germany	Mobilization and deployment of armed forces; strategic forces; strategic defense for purposes of halting enemy's advance and gaining time to prepare for offensive by allied Anglo-French forces	1 Sep- 2 Oct 1939	Strategic offensive by main forces mobilized and deployed in advance with the objective of defeating the Soviet Army in the border regions and setting the stage for unhindered advance toward extremely important political and industrial centers of USSR	

1	2	3	4	5
Soviet Union	Forced strategic defense by troops of first strategic echelon for repelling enemy aggression and defeat- July 1941	22 June- Middle of	Aggressor still succeeded in achieving important operational-strategic results; enemy's ground troops advanced up to 400-450 km to northwest, from 450 to 600 km to west and 300-350 km to southwest; military operations developed on front of more than 3000 km; average rate of advance by German forces was 20-30 km per day	Philippines, Indochina, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia under Japanese control
War in Pacific and in South-east Asia	General strategic offensive by Japanese forces on vast areas of Pacific and Southeast Asia	December 1941- April 1942	by summer of 1942; Japanese forces approached India, Australia and Alaska; their swift advance frustrated all attempts by allies to organize resistance on important strategic lines	
USA	Strategic defense, mobilization and preparation of forces for switching to offensive			

* "Istoriya pervoy mirovoy voyny 1914-1918," Moscow, Nauka, Vol 1, 1975, pp 273-276; "Sovetskaya voyennaya entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voyenizdat, Vol 2, 1976, pp 55-56; Vol 5, 1978, pp 554-557; "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Moscow, Voyenizdat, Vol 3, 1974, pp 16-22; Vol 4, 1975, pp 34, 35, 58.

therefore believed that the initial period would include mobilization, border engagements for covering the concentration and deployment of troops, the deployment of the main forces under the plan for the war and their occupation of the forming-up position for conducting the first decisive operations.

(Footnote 1) ("Vtoraya mirovaya voyna. 1939-1945" [World War II, 1939-1945], under the general editorship of S.P. Platonov, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1958, p 170 In this case fascist Germany would be operating under the same conditions as the Soviet Union.

World War II was begun and conducted entirely differently than World War I, however. The aggressor's capability for unexpected and concentrated employment of such types of weapons and branches of troops as the aviation and tanks, as well as large motorized formations, permitted him to simultaneously destroy troops and extremely important installations to a relatively great depth. This drastically altered the conditions for the strategic deployment of armed forces by the nations subjected to attack and the nature of their operations, and consequently, also the substance of the initial period.

From the very beginning of its aggression, fascist Germany carried out extensive offensive operations with powerful groupings of troops created in advance and deployed in secret. The immediate objective was to route the first echelon of the opposing side's armed forces, to frustrate the deployment of its main forces and set the stage for a victorious conclusion of the war. As a result, the states which were subjected to a surprise attack were forced, as a rule, to conduct difficult offensive battles with forces of the first strategic echelon during that period. The mobilization, concentration and deployment of forces of the second strategic echelon and the reserve continued under cover of those battles.

In its most general form, the initial period of World War II was therefore a specific segment of time during which the belligerents conducted the first (offensive and defensive) operations with groupings of armed forces deployed by the time the war began for purposes of achieving immediate strategic objectives or creating advantageous conditions for subsequent military operations. The side subjected to a surprise attack also carried out overt mobilization and internal measures to convert the nation to a wartime footing.

And so, the general trend in the change occurring in the substance of the initial period during the two past world wars was that active military operations conducted for purposes of achieving crucial strategic objectives began to dominate during that period. The aggressor conducted preparatory measures, including the mobilization and deployment of forces for conducting the first operations, during the period preceding the war.

The objectives assigned the armed forces during the initial period differed from those of World War I, and the quantity of personnel and equipment allocated for achieving them increased. The aggressor typically attempted to apply the entire power of its armed forces during the first strike, in order to disorganize command and control, to defeat the enemy's main groupings of forces, his aviation and navy, to stun him and deprive him of the possibility of resisting and taking retaliatory steps. In the war against France in 1940,

for example, 136 of 148 divisions mobilized by fascist Germany were concentrated for the initial thrust. This was more than 90 percent of all the Wehrmacht's ground forces. (Footnote 1) ("Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya," Moscow, Voenizdat, 1980, Vol 8, p 328) The German fascist command used 190 divisions, around 4,300 tanks, 47,200 guns and mortars, and 4,980 aircraft (more than 83 percent of the ground forces and 62 percent of the aviation) for the surprise attack on the USSR. (Footnote 2) (Ibid., Vol 2, p 55) The moment at which the main forces were committed to battle in World War II was moved decisively closer to its beginning as a result.

The changing substance of the initial period of a war is a trend which continues today. A war against the USSR and other socialist commonwealth nations, should imperialism's aggressive forces succeed in unleashing one, will be a crucial armed conflict between the two opposite systems, capitalism and socialism. The objective of a future war by the USA against the USSR is described with absolute clarity in Directive No. 59 signed by former U.S. President J. Carter in 1980: the destruction of socialism as a social and political system. The main concept behind the strategy of "direct confrontation" is the unlimited employment of strategic offensive forces in the first strike.

Soviet military doctrine is a defensive one. This means that the USSR will never be the first to employ nuclear weapons or military force. In the face of the real threat on the part of the imperialists, however, the Soviet Armed Forces are constantly prepared for retaliatory actions: a resolute rebuff for any aggressor and if necessary, an all-destroying strike.

All of this provides reason to assume that unlike past world wars, the main substance of the initial period in the contemporary situation may involve nuclear strikes or strikes with conventional weapons by the belligerents and the conduct of active military operations from the very beginning with strategic groupings of forces deployed in peacetime for achieving the main objectives of the war. The mobilization and deployment of the armed forces in the theaters of military operations and the conversion of the economy to a wartime footing may be completed at the same time.

World Wars I and II demonstrated with absolute clarity a stable /trend of growing importance for achieving the objective of the initial period of concentrated employment of new weaponry/. During World War I, the states in both coalitions were already intensively readying new types of weapons (aircraft, dirigibles, submarines, flame-throwers and chemical agents), with the surprise employment of which it was planned to stun the enemy and create good conditions for conducting subsequent combat operations. V.I. Lenin pointed out this trend. The German bourgeoisie, he wrote, "selected the time for the war most convenient from its standpoint, utilizing its latest improvements in military equipment and anticipating new weapons already planned and decided upon by Russia and France." (Footnote 2) (V.I. Lenin, "Poln. sobr. soch." [Complete Collected Works], Vol 26, p 16) As the destructive power and range of the weapons and the mobility of the troops increased, the possibilities for achieving increasingly more important strategic results during operations of the initial period also increased. Fascist Germany attempted

to utilize the factor again at the beginning of World War II. It had a powerful base of materiel and attempted to put into force its superiority in technical means of conducting warfare. The surprise and large-scale employment of those weapons permitted the German fascist command to achieve significant results within a short period of time. In the war against Poland, for example, massive strikes by German aircraft against airfields, road junctions and troops concentration sites made it possible to rapidly gain air superiority, frustrated the mobilization and strategic deployment, and disorganized control of the nation and its armed forces. The Wehrmacht's superiority in mobility and maneuverability made it possible to rapidly penetrate the Polish Army's defense and split its front into pieces, to encircle and eliminate the main groupings of forces.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, as a result of the concentrated employment of aircraft, tanks and motorized formations, the German fascist army succeeded in destroying the Soviet Forces' strategic defensive front, moving deep into their rear area, preventing reserves moved up from the depth from concentrating and from occupying their designated lines, frustrating or weakening counterthrusts and in many cases, encircling large groupings of troops or cutting them off from the main forces. (Footnote 1) ("Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Vol 4, p 489)

The employment of modern weapons can have an immeasurably greater effect upon the achievement of the objectives for the initial period of a future war. And we must not forget the fact that during the entire period since the war, the USA has been making a desperate effort to gain technical military superiority over the USSR. It has created an enormous arsenal of the latest weapons for implementing its aggressive schemes. Imperialist circles in the USA and their allies in NATO plan to use these latest weapons to inflict a "disarming" strike upon the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact nations, to deprive them of the possibility of taking retaliatory action, and to achieve their own objectives within a short period of time.

A /trend of growing influence of the results of the initial period upon the subsequent course of combat operations/ was extremely clearly manifested. It took shape during World War I. Although the military operations conducted during its initial period had limited objectives, they created favorable conditions for deploying groupings of armed forces and beginning the first operations. During World War II, this trend underwent further development. As a result of the large-scale use of new types of weapons and military equipment, as well as decisive methods of conducting combat operations, the German fascist army succeeded in capturing enormous territories during the initial period and defeating large groupings of armed forces, thereby creating favorable conditions for the subsequent armed conflict. Furthermore, in those case in which a nation subjected to aggression was inadequately prepared militarily and economically and occupied little territory, it suffered total defeat during the initial period (Poland, Holland and Denmark).

Even when the belligerents on both sides had considerable forces and equipment but one of them forestalled the other in deployment and execution of the strike,

the outcome of operations during the initial period placed the nation subjected to the surprise attack into an extremely difficult position and had a significant effect upon the subsequent course of the armed conflict. The unfavorable outcome of the initial period of the Great Patriotic War, for example, continued for a long time to have a negative effect upon the course of military operations and made it necessary for the Soviet people and their Armed Forces to apply enormous efforts to halt the enemy and alter the course of the struggle to their benefit.

In the Pacific theater, the American aviation on the Hawaiian and Philippine Islands was destroyed, and England's aviation and navy in Malaya suffered great damage as a result of strikes by the Japanese fleet and aviation in December of 1941. The swift advance of the Japanese, who held the initiative absolutely, frustrated all attempts by the allies to organize a defense on important strategic lines. And despite the great economic and military capabilities of the USA and England, the results of the initial period affected the subsequent course of military operations for a long time.

The constant development of weapons provides the basis for assuming that the results of the initial period in a future war can have a considerably greater affect upon the course and the outcome of military operations than in the past.

Stockpiles of nuclear ammunition and various delivery systems created in the USA and other NATO nations are perfectly adequate for rapidly destroying or damaging many times over all of the important targets to the entire depth of the nation subjected to attack. The strategic weapons presently possessed by the United States, for example, can lift more than 12,000 units of nuclear ammunition at a single launching (takeoff). The U.S. Government plans to increase its strategic first-strike capability to 20,000 nuclear charges by 1990. (Footnote 1) ("Otkuda iskhodit ugroza miru" [Whence Comes the Threat to Peace], 3rd edition, Moscow, Vojenizdat, 1984, pp 17, 31) Their total power exceeds hundreds of times over the power of all explosives and ammunition used by the warring states of the world during World War II. Plans worked out by the U.S. and NATO command set the mission of destroying both nuclear and conventional weapons of the Soviet Union, its military-economic facilities, railroad junctions, control agencies and posts, and destroying the main groupings of the armed forces. The USA, Defense Secretary C. Wineberger has stated, must acquire "the capability for delivering a nuclear strike against the Soviet Union which threatens the existence of the society itself." (Footnote 2) (PRAVDA, 3 July 1985) Objectively, the employment of the qualitatively new weapons in a future war will create the conditions necessary for achieving during its initial period, results which can in no way be compared with the results of the initial period of past wars. The importance of this period lies in the fact that the very first massive nuclear strikes can to an enormous degree predetermine the entire subsequent course of the war and result in losses in the rear area and in the forces, which can place the people and the nation into an exceptionally difficult situation. (Footnote 3) ("XII syezd Kommunisticheskoy parti Sovetskogo Soyuza. Stenograficheskiy otchet" [The 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: Stenographic Record], Vol II, Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1962, p 112) Because of this

the initial period of a future nuclear-missile war could be the main and decisive period, which will greatly predetermine the subsequent development of the armed conflict and in certain situations, the outcome of the war. Even if the war begins with the employment of conventional weapons, which have great destructive power and considerable range, airmobile formations and powerful armored equipment, the initial period may have an enormous influence upon the subsequent course of military operations.

A /trend of increasing spacial scope for military operations/ during the initial period was clearly revealed during the two world wars. During the initial period of World War I, unlike previous wars, German forces occupied the territory of neutral Luxemburg and captured the Belgium fortress of Liege in the West European theater.

During the initial period of World War II combat operations developed simultaneously over vast areas and enveloped areas deep in the rear of the belligerents. In the war against Poland, for example, they were conducted on a front of 700 kilometers and to a depth of 350-400 kilometers. The average daily rate of advance by the German fascist forces was 20-24 kilometers. During the initial period of the Great Patriotic War the armed conflict developed on a front of more than 3,000 kilometers. By mid-July striking groups of the Wehrmacht on the western sector had advanced to a depth of 400-600 kilometers, moving at an average daily rate of 20-30 kilometers. On certain days the enemy's tank groupings advanced 40 to 60 kilometers.

The fact that the opposing sides can use modern strategic nuclear weapons, particularly missiles with unlimited range and capable of striking at targets located anywhere on the planet, assures immeasurable expansion of the borders of an armed struggle, which may embrace all of the world's continents from the very beginning and become intercontinental.

Today, it is apparent that a different approach must be taken to the assessment of the time factor. The drastically increased range and speed of action of modern weapons makes it possible to rapidly destroy targets at various depths. This is graphically depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Approximate Data on Missile Flight Times

Расстояние до объекта поражения, км (1)	2000	4000	6000	8000	10 000	12 000
Время полета ракеты, мин (2)	6—8	15—17	20—22	30	33	35

Key:

1. Distance to target, km
2. Missile flight time, min

Since the new weapons make it possible to achieve the immediate strategic objectives far more rapidly than was the case in World War II, it is most likely that the initial period of a future war may also be briefer.

Consequently, the initial period of a future war will differ substantially from the initial periods of past wars with respect to scale of military operations. And this applies not just to a nuclear war. The new concept of the AirLand operation adopted by the Pentagon as part of the "direct confrontation" strategy, calls for the surprise launching of military operations, the infliction of maximum destruction upon the enemy with the latest weapons and determined operations into the depth by ground forces, air and naval forces, which simultaneously envelop all of the nation's territory.

The warring sides always attempted to use the element of surprise as one of the most important factors for achieving the assigned objective. /The trend toward the achievement of surprise in an attack by the aggressor was particularly vividly manifested in World War II/. The military-political leadership of fascist Germany and militaristic Japan used all possible means for achieving this: the press, radio, diplomatic channels, false documents, etc. Dissemination of false information was practiced on a large scale. Prior to an attack the aggressor would attempt to create a psychological climate in his nation and the region as a whole, which would permit him to "justify" his treachery. German fascism and Japanese militarism made extensive use of deliberate lies, blackmail and the intimidation of other nations with nonexistent danger for this purpose.

The difference in the degree of readiness of the armed forces on the opposing sides predetermined to a significant degree the aggressor's success and the unsuccessful outcome of the initial period for nations subjected to a surprise attack. Hitlerite Germany's treacherous surprise attack on the Soviet Union, for example, placed forces of the western border military districts into extremely difficult situations for conducting their initial operations. Because of the incomplete preparedness of the formations, they were committed to battle piecemeal and without essential fire and air support. The mobilization, concentration and operational deployment of the troops were carried out after combat operations had already begun, under air strikes and sometimes, under attack by enemy groupings. All of this was one of the most important reasons why events developed disadvantageously for us at the beginning of the war. In addition to this, it should be pointed out that the more the element of surprise came into play, the more effort and time were required of the nation subjected to aggression for stabilizing the front and altering the strategic situation in its favor.

In their preparations for a new war against the socialist nations, the aggressive imperialist states continue to count mainly on a surprise attack. Furthermore, the possibility of carrying out a so-called preventive strike, which is essentially an anticipatory attack, should the military-political leadership of the USA unleash a war, has been elevated to the rank of state policy. "The treacherous, predacious invasion of another's territory without a declaration of war," Marshal of the Soviet Union, Comrade S.L. Sokolov, candidate member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and Minister of Defense of the USSR, states, "has become a sort of norm for the imperialist aggressors." (Footnote 1) (KOMMUNIST, No 6, 1985, p 68)

The organizational development and the technical equipment of the armed forces of the USA and its NATO allies are being carried out, and various methods are being worked out for unleashing and conducting a war in the spirit of these aggressive designs. Large groupings capable of conducting active offensive operations for achieving the objectives of the initial operations without additional reinforcements have already been created near the borders of the socialist commonwealth nations. Strategic first-strike weapons are being developed at an accelerated pace, which can be placed into action immediately at the proper signal. Agencies and posts for troop control and command have been set up in the theaters of military operations, and a global communications system has been established. The USA with its enormous nuclear capability stubbornly resists accepting a commitment not to be the first to employ nuclear weapons.

Various types of exercises and large-scale maneuvers by groupings of NATO's armed forces are regularly conducted near the borders of the Warsaw Pact nations in a situation approaching actual combat to the maximum possible degree. Each year 300,000-350,000 soldiers and officers, up to 15,000 units of tracked equipment, more than 2,000 combat aircraft and 300-500 ships take part in them annually. (Footnote 1) (KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 16 January 1985) Different versions of general and "limited" wars against the socialist nations are openly practiced in these exercises. Large mobilizational activities and strategic troop movements, and joint operations involving conventional, nuclear and chemical weapons are planned and rehearsed.

The "Global Shield" exercises have been regularly conducted of late, which are unprecedented with respect to scale and the composition of the forces involved and which practice variations for conducting a strategic nuclear war against the Soviet Union. Intercontinental ballistic missiles are launched, and massive flights are made toward the USSR by strategic aircraft during these exercises. (Footnote 2) ("Otkuda iskhodit ugroza miru," p 68) This has made it more and more difficult to distinguish these exercises and maneuvers from the real initiation of aggression. They therefore make it far easier to carry out secret preparations for a war against the USSR and to achieve a surprise attack. Along with the material preparations, unceasing massive "psychological attacks" continue as in the past to be carried out against the socialist social system and Marxist-Leninist ideology. Entire streams of lies and slander sweep onto the socialist nations.

The possibility of a surprise attack by an aggressor employing all the available power of its armed forces has brought forth the requirement that the army and navy be maintained in a constant state of readiness to repel aggression and inflict powerful retaliatory strikes upon the enemy.

And so, the experience of the past two world wars makes it possible to conclude that the substance and the nature of the initial period have changed and that its influence upon the subsequent course of the war has increased. The scope of military operations has grown immeasurably. The surprise factor has assumed a greater and greater role. The likelihood of the employment of qualitatively new types of weapons with enormous destructive power and the changes which have occurred in methods of conducting military operations

provide the basis for assuming that the trends noted will retain their significance also in a future war.

The World War II experience made it perfectly apparent that the initial period had come to involve mainly extremely intensive combat operations to seize the initiative and achieve the most important strategic objectives. The change in the procedure for entering a war was brought about by qualitative changes in the entire system for preparing a nation for war, particularly in the sequence and the time involved in accomplishing the strategic deployment of the armed forces. It became imperative to take the main steps to prepare for frustrating aggression when an actual threat of attack arose. It became particularly important to reduce the amount of time required to accomplish them to the maximum possible degree.

The initial period of the Great Patriotic War demonstrated once again that it is necessary to vigilantly monitor the intrigues of the aggressive imperialist states and to always know the status of their armed forces and the possible nature of their activities. The more serious becomes the threat of the surprise unleashing of a war by an aggressor, the greater must be the combat readiness of the army and navy and the more stable must be the system of leadership of the armed forces and of the nation as a whole. The repelling of a surprise attack, the successful development of military operations and the subsequent course of a war depend to a crucial degree upon the capability of the armed forces during the very first minutes of the war to make determined and effective use of their combat strength, to employ the weapons at their disposal and immediately carry out the missions assigned to them.

Because of the increased role of new types of weapons and combat equipment in the achievement of the objectives for the initial period, it has become particularly important to maintain the technical equipment of the troops and naval forces at a high level. The lessons from the past war teach us that in order for the armed forces not to be caught unawares, they must always have the most modern types of weapons and combat equipment, which incorporate the latest scientific achievements and which are not inferior to analogous weapons systems of the armies of likely enemies with respect to tactical and technical characteristics.

The fact that questions pertaining to the initial period had not been adequately worked out theoretically prior to the war had a certain negative effect upon the course of military operations at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. It is extremely important for military science to thoroughly study in peacetime all of the most important problems pertaining to preparations for and the conduct of the armed struggle during the initial period. It is highly important to study the initial periods of the past world wars and those of local wars and conflicts unleashed by the imperialist states.

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